

# MAFIOSA PRINCESS by Liza Malloy

## EXCERPT

I shielded my eyes from the sun peeking in above my calypso blue sunglasses and gazed over at Luca. He was pacing back and forth ten or so yards away, clutching his phone tightly by his ear.

I tried to view him the way the other girls must. It wasn't hard to see the appeal. He was indisputably good-looking, the quintessential Italian man. Lean muscle comprised his tall frame, long black eyelashes framed his rich chocolate eyes, and his dark brownish-black hair was soft and just long enough to run my fingers through. He carried himself with confidence, and everything about him oozed wealth and power.

I thought about what Luca said, how he'd admitted that losing me was a mistake. Had he actually meant that, or was he just trying to cheer me up? I wasn't oblivious to the way he flirted with me, or the way he unapologetically checked me out whenever he wanted. But that didn't necessarily signal anything except for a deep-seated sense of entitlement on his part.

Years ago, I was more susceptible to Luca's charms. Even at sixteen, he radiated control and dominance. The attention he bestowed on me in high school instantly ratcheted up my popularity and made me more sought after by all of the guys, but thanks to Luca's smooth lines and ceaseless flattering, I had eyes only for him.

During the time we'd been a couple, my self-esteem had been at an all-time high. If the coveted Luca Marino loved me, I had to be beautiful, smart, and funny. He wouldn't have wasted his attentions on someone unworthy. Besides, he could've had any girl at our school. Yet, he chose me.

Now, years later, my heart still fluttered at the possibility that Luca still wanted me. It was flattering, and it was precisely the ego-boost I needed after watching Adrian leave me for Chicago. But could it be more than that?